



[J B Marks, 1903-1972](#)

## **Congress, Pact and Defiance**

The National Democratic Revolution is more than a theory. It has a history. In South Africa, the unity of the vanguard party, the mass democratic liberation movement, and workers' industrial unions, was created by the actions of countless individuals in the course of many historic events.

In terms of South African history we have already noted, among others, the formation of the ANC in 1912, the ICU in 1919, and the SACP in 1921. We have considered the Black Republic Thesis, Moses Kotane's Cradock Letter, and the sectarian problems of the CPSA in the 1930s. The Party had already begun to solve some of these problems by the time South Africa became part of the war of 1939-1945.

Although we will mostly refer from now on, in the second half of this 12-part series on the NDR, to South African events, yet it is as well to keep in mind that the National Democratic

revolutionary wave was a world-wide historic change. NDRs swept old-style colonialism almost completely off the face of the planet in the decades following the Second World War. Almost, but not quite. The brutal colonisation of Palestine continues to this day.

Thanks partly to the [Comintern](#) and to [Georgi Dimitrov](#), the World War that began in 1939 was to a great extent a conscious unity-in-action against the fascists. It is true that the Comintern was wound up on 15 May, 1943, but by that time the international anti-fascist alliance was in place.

The war came to an end in August, 1945, and the United Nations came into being on 24 October 1945, with a membership of 51 nations (and an intention of banning war forever). Sixty-eight years later, and as a direct consequence of multiple, worldwide National Democratic Revolutions, UN membership is approaching 200 independent nations – nearly four times as many as there were in 1945.

A lot of organising had been done in the relatively more favourable conditions in South Africa during the anti-fascist war of 1939-45. Among the structures that came into existence were the Transvaal Council of Non-European Trade Unions, and the African Mine Workers' Union, one of whose leaders was J B Marks [pictured above].

A lot was in place, yet action was required that would convert the preparations into permanent, historical and revolutionary facts. The historic action that fulfilled this role in the first place

was the African Mineworkers' Strike of September, 1946.

Writing in 1976, M P Naicker described how the African Mineworkers' Strike changed everything, both within South Africa, and also externally:

*"The African miners' strike was one of those historic events that, in a flash of illumination, educate a nation, reveal what has been hidden, and destroy lies and illusions. The strike transformed African politics overnight.*

*"Dr. A. B. Xuma, President-General of the African National Congress, joined a delegation of the South African Indian Congress (SAIC) sent to the 1946 session of the United Nations General Assembly when the question of the treatment of Indians in South Africa was raised by the Government of India. He, together with the SAIC representatives - H. A. Naidoo and Sorabjee Rustomjee - and Senator H. M. Basner, a progressive white 'Native Representative' in the South African Senate, used the occasion to appraise Member States of the United Nations of the strike of the African miners and other aspects of the struggle for equality in South Africa.*

*"Dealing with this visit the ANC, at its annual conference from December 14 to 17, 1946, passed the following resolution:*

*"Congress congratulates the delegates of India, China and the Soviet Union and all other countries who championed*

*the cause of democratic rights for the oppressed non-European majority in South Africa.”*

*“The brave miners of 1946 gave birth to the ANC Youth League's Programme of Action adopted in 1949; they were the forerunners of the freedom strikers of May 1, 1950, against the Suppression of Communism Act, and the tens of thousands who joined the 26 June nation-wide protest strike that followed the killing of sixteen people during the May Day strike. They gave the impetus for the 1952 Campaign of Defiance of Unjust Laws when thousands of African, Indian and Coloured people went to jail; they inspired the mood that led to the upsurge in 1960 and to the emergence of Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) - the military wing of the African National Congress.”*

In the current set we will proceed to the Doctors' Pact and then to the Defiance Campaign that was mounted following the banning of the CPSA in 1950. In the week after that, we will go to the Freedom Charter campaign of the mid-1950s. In all of this we are seeing the NDR as a revolutionary class alliance that is democratic in both form and content.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [The African Miners Strike of 1946, Naicker](#).
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